

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Knight, William Baker and Mary, House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 3534 Walnut St. not for publication N/A

city or town Kansas City vicinity N/A

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64111

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles

08/28/03

Signature of certifying official

Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau Missouri Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined eligible for the

National Register

 See continuation sheet.

 determined not eligible for the

National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House

Property Name

Jackson County, Missouri

County and State

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

1 buildings
 sites
 structures
 objects
1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the
National Register**N/A**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK,STONEroof ASPHALTwalls BRICKSTONEWOODSTUCCO

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1890-1914

Significant Dates

1890

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☒ X State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ X Other

Name of repository:

Kansas City Public Library

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Property Name

Jackson County, Missouri
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 362900 4324880 3 _____

2 _____ 4 _____

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Jezak Ford

organization Citysearch Preservation date August 18, 2003

street & number 3628 Holmes St. telephone 816-531-2489

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64109

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Dan Magrone and Will Ray

street & number 3524 Walnut St. telephone 816-756-2815

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64111

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri**

Overview

The William Baker Knight house, built in 1890, is located at 3534 Walnut Street in Kansas City, Missouri, at the northwest corner of 36th and Walnut Streets. Although the house is just one block east of Main Street, a busy commercial thoroughfare, it is part of a historic residential neighborhood. The three-story house sits on two city lots, on a site that measures approximately 135 feet (east-west) by 100 feet (north-south.) The house's gabled primary façade faces east, but the south cross-gabled elevation is also quite prominent. Other significant exterior features include a second-story sleeping porch added in 1914, a one-story chamfered bay on the south façade and a full front porch that wraps around the southeast corner of the house. The house is designed in the Queen Anne style, with Tudor Revival influences. A modern wrought iron fence surrounds the perimeter of the north, east and south sides of the property and a wood fence runs along the west property line. The house retains its integrity in form, details and placement.

Exterior

The exterior of the Knight house contains a variety of construction materials. The first story and basement level are clad in rusticated blocks of red sandstone. A smooth sandstone watercourse runs around the perimeter of the house and sandstone dentils separate the first and second stories of the house. The second story is deep red brick ornamented with half timbering. The third story is decorative half timbering with stucco fill. Unless noted, all windows are wood in a one-over-one configuration. Windows on the first story have massive stone lintels and smaller stone sills. Windows on the second and third stories are framed in the half-timber trim. Basement windows are rectangular and divided into two side-by-side panes. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and has three identical chimneys. These chimneys rise well above the peaks of the house's gables and are ornamented with patterns in the brick. The irregularity of the house's overall design and window placement prevents it from being classified into strict bays.

The house's main east façade consists of a dominant half-timbered gable and a full one-story porch. The third story of the gable projects from the plane of the house and is supported by brackets. The upper half of this gable projects again and is supported by wood modillions. A row of four small windows is located within the central portion of the gable. These one-over-one windows contain multiple leaded panes—24 in each sash of the two central windows and 16 in each portion of the two outer windows. Two central rectangular vents are placed in the uppermost portion of the gable and one of the house's chimneys projects from the gable's south roof. Three irregularly spaced windows are placed in the house's brick second story. These windows are framed with half-timbering, but only the far northeast corner contains the timber trim over brick that is found on the rest of the house's second story. The house's main entrance, located in the north corner of the east façade, is an original oak paneled door with beveled glass. A rectangular leaded window with 50 square panes is located to the south of the doorway. The south half of the first story has two windows. The side-gabled front porch, original to the house, spans the first story. The porch is supported by five turned posts on the east façade and has one engaged post on the northeast corner of the house. The porch's floor and ceiling are wood. The house's entrance is approached by a set of rose marble steps, which replaced deteriorated wood steps in 2002.¹ Low sandstone block walls surround the steps and a wood newel post is placed to the left of the steps at the porch level.

¹ These steps were salvages from a demolished historic building in Kansas City's Northeast neighborhood.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

The east portion of the **south elevation** contains the eave of the house's front gable and the east chimney. A section of stuccoed half-timbering is located directly below the eave and a window is placed in the second story of this section. The house's gabled front porch wraps around the southeast corner of the house, supported by three turned posts. One engaged post is also located at the western edge of the porch gable. A first-story window is placed just west of this engaged post with a basement window below it. The house's cross gable, set slightly lower than the main ridge, fills most of the western portion of the south elevation. The third story of the gable, supported by brackets, projects beyond the plane of the house and, as seen in the east gable, the upper portion projects again, supported by modillions. The gable contains a set of three doublehung windows with 24 small panes of leaded glass in each portion. In the second story, a larger set of doublehung four-over-four windows is located directly below those in the third story. A three-sided chamfered bay with a pent roof and three windows projects from the first story of this portion of the south side. One window is located in the basement level of the center of the bay. The western portion of this elevation consists of the western edge of the main gable, a second-story sleeping porch and a probable combination of the original rear of the house and the 1914 extension of the first story. A chimney projects at the roofline of the west juncture of the cross gable. The second story extends beyond this gable and the flat roof of the extension contains a wrought iron railing for a modern third-story deck.² The eastern half of the second-story sleeping porch is brick; the western portion is clapboard siding. The second story holds two pairs of casement windows. The first story has three small windows and three basement windows. The house's sheltered rear entry is located in the southwest corner of the first story.

The **west elevation** is the rear of the house, dominated by a central gable and the south sleeping porch extension. The third story of the main gable has a central vent placed above a pair of leaded windows with 36 panes in each sash. The two-story sleeping porch is clad in clapboards and minimal half-timbered trim. The second story of the porch contains three pairs of casement windows. The south corner of the house's first story holds the original paneled and glass back door, located under the corner of the sleeping porch. A turned post in the southwest corner of the porch supports the second story and five rose marble steps lead to the entry level of the rear porch. Immediately north of the rear entry is the original paneled basement door. A single window is located in the north portion of the first story of rear clapboard wall. The north section of the west elevation consists of a wall on the same plane as the house's back door and the side of the house's north cross gable, which projects from the north wall. A pent roof, which intersects with the flat roof, extends from the cross gable to provide a short roof at the one-and-a-half-story level. Immediately below the pent roof is a short section of half-timbered brick and a stone wall fills the rest of this section. A window is located at the juncture of the main wall and the porch and a basement window is located in the center of this wall.

The **north elevation** is fronted by the house's gravel driveway. This driveway originally led to a carriage house, no longer extant, located on the northwest corner of the property. The north side of the sleeping porch holds a pair of casement windows in the second story and a clapboarded wall in the first story. The north cross gable extends slightly from the house's main plane. A pent roof extends eastward from the gable, creating a one-and-

² This railing replicates the fence that surrounds the perimeter of the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

a-half-story projection from the rear of the house. The north side of this extension contains a leaded window in the second story, set within the half-timbered brick. The first story holds a single paned window fronted by iron bars. The house's third chimney rises from the east side of the cross gable. The projecting third story of the gable, supported by modillions, contains a central doublehung window with 36 leaded glass panes in each sash. The second story of the cross gable houses a single double-hung window and a smaller doublehung window with 45 leaded panes in each panel. A tall, narrow window, measuring approximately nine feet tall and filled with leaded glass panes is placed in the east corner of the second story. This large window, and its matching counterpart in the east wall of the cross-gable projection, lights the house's main stairway. The first story of the cross gable has three irregularly spaced windows and the basement level has two windows. The east section of the north elevation holds the eave of the front gable. A section of half-timbered stucco is located just below this eave. The second story of this portion of the north façade does not contain any windows. The first story contains two rectangular single windows, each with 50 leaded panes. A basement window is located beneath each of these windows.

Interior

The interior of the Knight house has three stories, plus a basement. As is typical for a Queen Anne house, the main rooms on the first story are designed to meet and impress the public. These rooms—the entry, front parlor, back parlor and dining room—contain the most striking woodwork found in the house. All of the interior woodwork, however, is impressive in its integrity, having never been painted or removed. Original trim and moldings are present on all three stories. Space delineation is also typical for a Queen Anne house of this size. Most first-story rooms are connected, many with pocket doors. This allows their use as one grand space or closed off as individual spaces. Central hallways run the length of the second and third stories with individual rooms located on either side. Second-story rooms are connected by individual doors as well. Ceilings are approximately ten feet tall on the first and second story and approximately eight feet tall on the third story.

The first story of the Knight house contains a central hallway housing the main staircase, a foyer, front parlor, back parlor, dining room, kitchen, dry pantry and butler's pantry. Interlocking floor molding measures nine-and-a-half inches and oak or maple floorboards are two-and-a-half inches wide. The first story previously featured picture molding ornamented with plaster—this has been removed and the remnants are stored on-site to be installed at a later date. The foyer, located in the northeast corner of the house, has oak wainscoting approximately five feet tall. One enters the foyer through the house's main entry door and enters the hallway through another paneled and glass door. The house's central hallway runs east-west and a leaded glass window, matching one in the foyer, is located on the east end of the hallway. The house's grand oak staircase, with ornamented newel posts and pendants, wainscoting and turned spindles is located on the north wall. The staircase has two lower landings, with window seats placed below massive multi-paned leaded glass windows. A small half-bathroom is located under the stairway. The house's front parlor, trimmed in mahogany, fills the southeast corner of the house. Pocket doors are placed at the north and west entrances, one window is on the south wall and two windows are on the east wall. The focal point of this room is the east fireplace, consisting of a mahogany mantel and trim surrounding an upper mirror. Umber glazed art tiles surround the firebox; a row of tiles featuring cherubs runs across the upper portion of the fireplace. The house's back parlor, also with mahogany woodwork, houses the south chamfered bay window. The north wall has a traditional paneled door

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEETSection 7 Page 4Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

and a pocket door. The northwest corner of the room holds a glass-fronted bookcase. A previous owner replaced the matching bookcase once located in the southwest corner of the room with an access door to the kitchen. The west wall of the room holds another mahogany fireplace. The wood surrounds an upper mirror and copper ornamentation has been applied to the wood surround immediately below the mantel. Narrow art tiles in a rust-brown glaze surround the firebox and the tile area is edged in copper. The dining room, also with mahogany woodwork, is located in the northwest portion of the house. This room once had a chamfered fireplace in the northeast corner; it was removed in 1914 and will be recreated by the current owners. Two windows are placed in the north wall of this room. The butler's pantry is located behind the dining room in the northwest corner of the house. Fir cabinets line the east wall, with a break for a window placed above a sink, and a single-paned window is on the north wall. A south doorway leads one from the butler's pantry to the large kitchen. The kitchen space is currently being renovated, but original features include three windows on the south wall and a rear exterior door in the southwest corner of the room. Three original doors on the west wall lead to a pantry, the basement stairs and stairs to the second story. The kitchen's ceiling is elaborate pressed metal with cove moldings. It is likely that the metal ceiling was added when this portion of the house was remodeled in 1914.

The central stairway provides the primary access to the second story of the Knight house. From the second-story landing, one can see that the heavily ornamented posts of the first two floors give way to plainer posts on the third story. The second-story hallway is trimmed in oak and mahogany trims the bedrooms. The oak floorboards are quite narrow, measuring one-and-a-half inches wide. A central east-west hallway runs the length of this story, with transomed entrances to four bedrooms and one bathroom placed along the hallway. Bedrooms are located in the northeast and southeast corners of the house, as well in the northwest and southwest areas. Most bedrooms have original closets, many with built-in dressers and shelves. A shallow opening in the southeast bedroom once accommodated a fireplace, removed in 1914. The fireplace in the southwest bedroom has an intact cherry mantel and blue-green art tiles with molded morning glories on the hearth and surrounding the firebox. The house's main bathroom, with its original six-inch by three-inch white wall tiles and hexagonal floor tiles, is located in the center of the north wall. The bathroom's leaded glass doublehung window has 45 panes in each section. The northwest corner of the house holds a modern laundry/utility room. The southwest corner is filled by the sleeping porch, added in 1914, with casement windows placed on the north, west and south walls. A staircase enters the room from the kitchen on the west wall and a very narrow staircase leads to the third story on the east wall.

The third story of the Knight house contains two bedrooms with closets, a small sunroom, and one bathroom. The molding on this story is painted, and the corners of the windows and doors feature bull's-eye trim pieces. The floorboards are oak, measuring one-and-a-half inches wide. A central east-west hallway runs the length of the third story and the doorways have transoms. A bedroom spans the front of the house and four east windows filled with panes of square leaded glass. The southeast corner of the room has a projection from the chimney flue; this projection once accommodated a coal heating stove, now removed. The other third-story bedroom is located on the south side of the house. The bathroom, a bedroom prior to 1914, is located on the north side of the house. The small third-story sunroom fills the southwest corner of the house and has two double-hung windows with 36 leaded glass panes in each portion. A very narrow staircase rises from the second story on the east wall of the sunroom. A doorway to a deck is located in the southwest corner of the room.

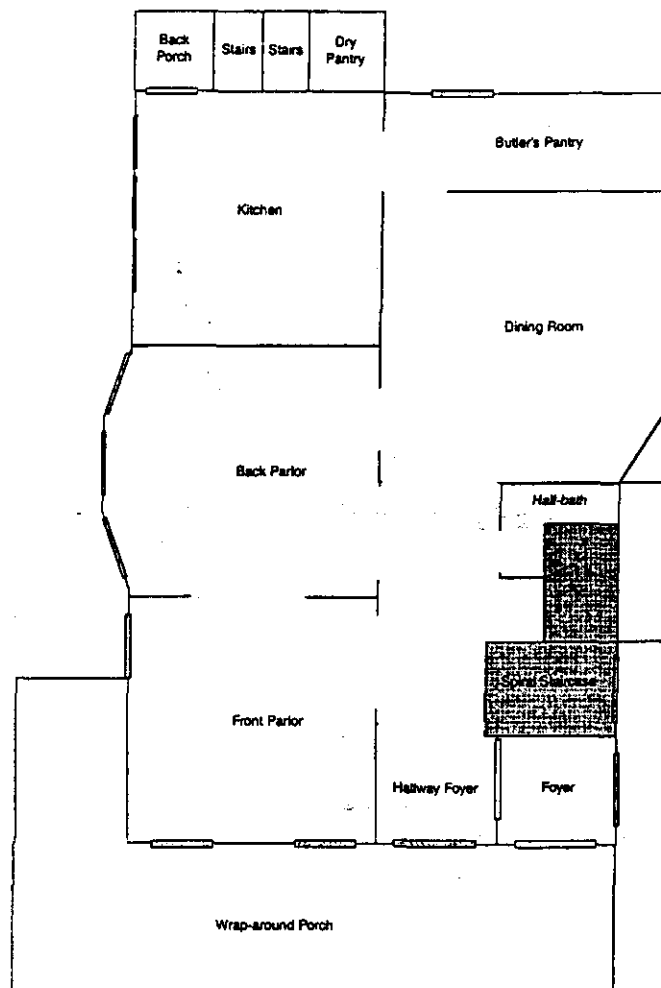
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

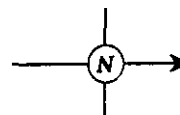
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

**Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri**



First Floor Plans



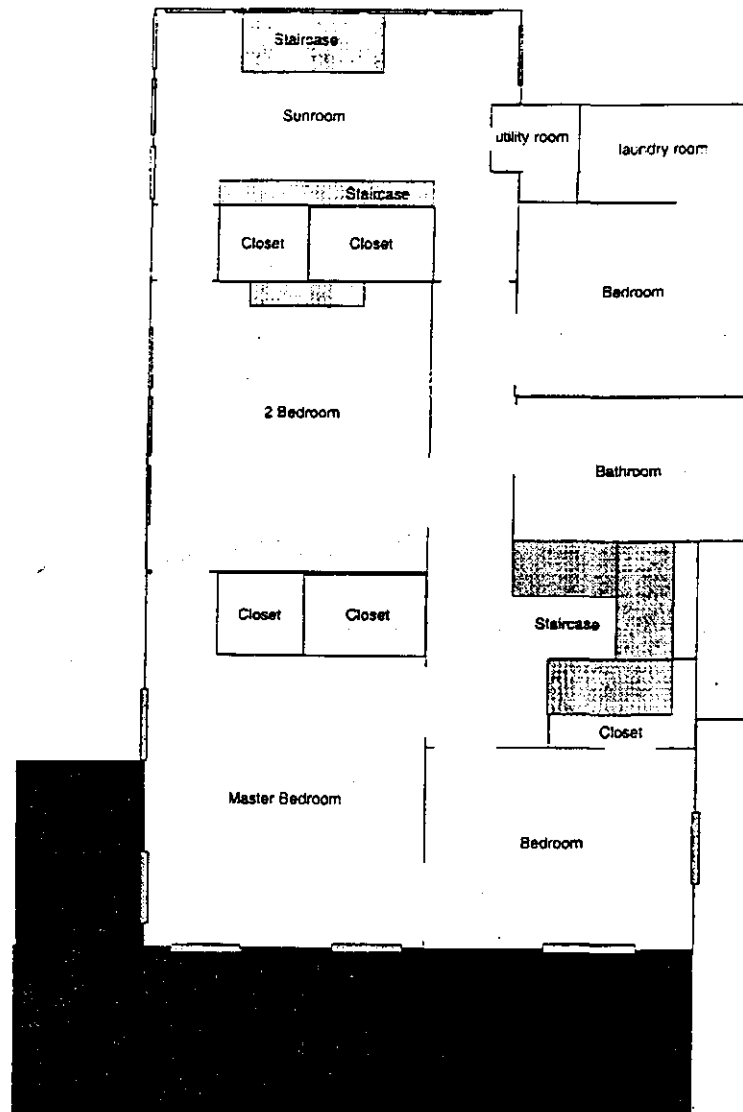
Schematic Floor Plan (not to scale), drawn by Will Ray

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

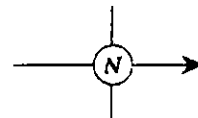
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 6

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri



Second Floor Plans



Schematic Floor Plan (not to scale), drawn by Will Ray

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

Summary

The William Baker Knight house, located at 3534 Walnut Street in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Knight, a nationally recognized civil engineer and significant in the planning and construction of early Kansas City rail lines, built his large home at the southernmost point of the Kansas City trolley line in 1890. The house is significant as a superb example of the Victorian Queen Anne style. The home is designed and built in a grand manner, reflected in materials and details of a very high quality consistent with the Queen Anne style. The period of significance is 1890-1914, the year of construction through the date of the last major exterior modifications to the property.

Architecture

The Knight house is significant as an excellent example of the Victorian Queen Anne style. The house features masonry and half-timbering, both uncommon treatments for this style. The house was featured in two volumes of noteworthy Kansas City architecture, *Kansas City: A Place in Time* by the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri and *Kansas City* by the Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.³

The Victorian Queen Anne style was reaching the height of its popularity when William Baker Knight and his wife, Mary, constructed the house. The style was commonly found in Kansas City neighborhoods settled in the 1880s and 1890s.⁴ Queen Anne houses were noted for decorative exteriors, achieved through wall overhangs, extensions and the application of a variety of materials, all seen on this house. The incorporation of decorative half-timbering would have made the house especially noticeable, as only about five percent of Queen Anne houses feature this treatment.⁵ The house also contains other elements consistent with the Queen Anne sub-type. These elements, also found in some Tudor Revival houses, include dominant gables facing the public thoroughfares, groupings of three windows, brackets and modillions supporting the third story and patterned masonry chimneys. The house is also notable for its masonry construction, present in only approximately five percent of Queen Anne houses.⁶ The house retains its early exterior form, including a 1914 sleeping porch addition. The house's interior is also remarkably well preserved. The original floor plan, woodwork, windows, stairway and fireplace surrounds all contribute to its very high level of integrity.

The Knight house is consistent with a description offered by Leland M. Roth in *American Architecture*:

The Queen Anne house has a free plan, with sitting room, dining room, and front parlor arranged around a reception hall that also serves as a spacious stair hall. The main public rooms open to each other by means of broad sliding doors that slide back into pockets in the walls, so that the entire

³ Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri, *Kansas City: A Place in Time* (Kansas City, MO: Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri, 1977), 216. *Kansas City* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1979), 111. The *Place in Time* volume erroneously identifies the style of the Knight house as Stick.

⁴ Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri, *Historic Resources Survey Plan of Kansas City* (Kansas City, MO: Landmarks Commission, 1992), 121.

⁵ Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 264.

⁶ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

interior can either be interconnected spaces or discrete rooms. The kitchen to the rear is connected to one or two servant's rooms upstairs by means of a tight back stair. There is almost always a wrap-around porch of some sort... The interior is finished with elaborate wooden trim, especially in the stair hall and public rooms downstairs. And the exterior is more richly embellished in a variety of materials, with stone and brick base and lower walls, usually with framed upper walls...⁷

A Victorian residence's greatest character-defining feature is its overall form. The massing of Queen Anne homes is typically cubed, although lower protruding cross gables contribute to a characteristic asymmetrical form. The form of the Knight House is no exception to the rule. Although basically cube shaped, the house's protruding elements contribute to its irregular footprint. Among these elements are lower cross gables, which jut from a steep gabled roof, and a chamfered bay window.

The layering of planes adds further depth to Queen Anne designs. Like the gable ornament on many Queen Anne buildings, the half-timbered section of the Knight House's most prominent gables project forward from the house's plane. The second gable projection adds another plane. On secondary elevations, brackets and a pent roof transform flat gables into three-dimensional elements.

Just as a home's overall form professes its architectural style, so too does its materials. It is the atypical Queen Anne residence that contains a significant amount of masonry, as does the Knight house. Its exterior is constructed with sandstone cut into rusticated blocks, ornamented with carved sandstone dentils. The house's half-timbering ornament covers brick on the second story and is filled with stucco on the third story. These materials work in harmony to create a juxtaposition of geometric patterns and rich textures.

Eclectic fenestration adds to the complexity of Queen Anne design. The majority of the Knight House's windows, all original, are one-over-one double-hung windows in groups of three or alone. However, the several multiple-paned leaded windows fit well the building's style.

Like its exterior, the interior of the Knight House retains a high degree of integrity. Elaborate interior woodwork is a trademark of the Queen Anne style. Woodwork in public spaces, such as foyers, parlors and dining rooms, is typically of a higher quality than that in private areas. The Knight House features oak and maple floors and mahogany trim on the first story. The second story also features all oak floors and some mahogany trim. The most striking interior feature in most Queen Anne homes is the staircase, typically located near the main entrance. The Knight House's staircase is constructed of oak and features several decorative newel posts, pendants and spindlework balusters.

Although no documentation exists verifying Knight as the house's architect, elements consistent with an engineer's attention to detail are present throughout the house. Non-essential but noteworthy elements include brass pipes laid where plumbing would be inaccessible, doorbells carved into the stone at the front and back

⁷ John C. Pelton, Jr., *Cheap Dwellings*, (San Francisco, 1882), quoted by Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2001), 242.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

doors and room heaters that burned an extremely efficient form of coal.

William Baker Knight

William Baker Knight, a nationally recognized civil engineer, was born in New York City in 1848. He was educated in public school and began studying engineering in 1864 at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, N.Y. He began practicing as an engineer in New York State in November 1867. He was employed to work in the field and to do office work on the Hudson Highland Suspension Bridge. He was then employed to survey and divide Westchester County in 1868. The Poughkeepsie and Eastern Railroad soon hired him as engineer in charge of field work for town and highway surveys on Staten Island.

Knight's accomplishments grew as he moved on to work on the New Haven, Middletown and Lillimantic Railroad in Connecticut, where he helped locate 50 miles and oversaw construction of 20 miles of track, including a bridge that spanned 1100 feet over the Connecticut River. In 1871, he worked as assistant engineer for the Brunswick and Albany Railroad, Georgia and as principal assistant engineer for the South Florida Railroad. In 1872, he was awarded the position of transitman in charge of field operations for 300 hundred miles of line for the New York, West Shore and Chicago Railroad. In September 1874, he joined the Board of Public Works for Washington, D.C. and was employed in the construction of the main sewer system, laying out new streets and serving as the assistant engineer in charge of the Eastern Division.

Serving as chief engineer and assistant superintendent, Knight was engaged in the 1875 extension, operation and management of the Lake Erie, Evansville and Southwestern Railroad in Indiana. He was next appointed to the Department of Public Parks in New York City as assistant engineer and inspector of drainage works. He worked for the Panama Railroad Company from February 1878 until August 1879 as assistant to the general superintendent in the operation and management of the railway.

Knight came to Kansas City in 1879 to establish the firm of Knight and Bontecou, Civil Engineers. The firm gained a reputation as one of the leading engineering firms in the west and was responsible for laying out the Union Transit Company's Line in Kansas City. Knight also worked as an engineer on the improvement of the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad Company terminal. He designed and constructed the Arkansas City Canal at Arkansas City, Kansas and was also employed to do engineering work for the Union Depot Company in Kansas City. He was appointed City Engineer of Kansas City by Mayor Bullene in April 1882, serving a total of three years. As city engineer, he oversaw the laying of the first cedar block pavement in Kansas City.

The firm of Knight and Bontecou focused primarily on the building of city cable lines and served as the Chief Engineers for the Grand Avenue and Metropolitan Railway Companies, constructing 20 miles of double-track cable railways in Kansas City. As chief engineer, Knight was responsible for the design and construction of the lines in downtown Kansas City. He is credited with designing and constructing Kansas City's cable railway lines on 12th Street, 5th Street and 18th Street, as well as the Main Street Loop.⁸ He was appointed chief engineer of the Kansas City Belt Railway in 1887 and was in charge of building the line's double tracks and other

⁸ These lines are no longer extant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

improvements. Knight and Bontecou also served as consulting engineers for the St. Louis Cable and Western Railroad Company of St. Louis.

Knight's national reputation as one of the country's leading engineers led to professional associations that included membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers, membership in the Civil Engineers' Club of St. Louis and his election as president at the organization of the Kansas City Engineers' Club.⁹

Knight married Mollie (Mary) Frye of Independence, Missouri in 1886 and the couple had two children, a son and a daughter. The family lived at 1216 Penn Street until moving just prior to his death to the house at the northwest corner of 36th and Walnut Streets.

Few records remain concerning the construction of Knight's house, completed in 1890. The southernmost end of Kansas City's trolley line was an appropriate location for this locally and nationally known engineer. It is likely that Knight and his engineering background had a strong influence on the design details of the house. A defining interior ornament is a shield emblem intertwined with acanthus leaves on the first- and second-story newel posts of the main stairway. The house contains innovative touches, such as voice tubes linking the first story with rooms on the second and third story and coal-burning fireplaces. The house contains no doorknockers; instead, electric doorbells are installed into the stone at the front and back doors. Overall, the house was simply designed, but materials and details made the construction labor-intensive, with the goal that it would need little maintenance over the years. The best materials of the time were used in its construction—stone, brick, stucco, copper guttering and a slate roof. Where plumbing is inaccessible, pipes are brass.

Knight was involved in several projects at the time of his sudden death at the age of 42. He had recently served as the consulting engineer for the Tacoma Railway and Motor Company and to the Kansas City and Suburban Belt Railway Company. He was chief engineer of the Union Depot Company, the Kansas City Belt Railway, the Augusta, Georgia Railway Company and the Joplin Electric and Motor Railroad and the Kansas City Link Railway Company. At the time of his death in December 1890, he was returning home from Chicago, where he served as general manager of the Patent Motor and Manufacturing Company. Tragically, the sleeper train he was traveling in was cut in two by a coal train. Knight suffered severe burns over most of his body and died in Jacksonville, Illinois several days later.

Knight's body was returned to Kansas City and the Unitarian funeral was held in his new home. *The Kansas City Star* reported, "Mr. Knight had many friends and the rooms of his late home were crowded with those anxious to pay him their last tribute..."¹⁰ The Kansas City board of public works granted its department employees leave of absence to attend the funeral. Resolutions of respect were adopted by the Kansas City department of engineering, the directors of the Kansas City Switch and Frog Company and the Kansas City Engineers' Club.

⁹ Theo. S. Case, *History of Kansas City Missouri* (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1888), 534.

¹⁰ "Funeral of W.B. Knight." *The Kansas City Star*, 9 December 1890, 2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 11

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

History of the House

The Knight house, built in 1890, was the first on its block, part of the newly platted neighborhood of Hyde Park in Kansas City, Missouri. Advertisements were placed in local newspapers in 1889 extolling the neighborhood. The area was promoted as "a highly improved addition, away from the dust, smoke and noise of the city, yet near enough for convenience, being but 18 minutes ride by cable to the center of the city." The notices went on to say that the handsome lawns were "50 feet wide each, high and sightly."¹¹ The neighborhood was connected to city water and sewers and included a "gem of a little park close by."¹²

The water permit is the only written evidence from the construction of the Knight house. Preliminary service was connected in May 1889 and the final inspection of the facilities took place on May 29, 1890, so it is likely that construction took approximately one year and that the Knight family moved into the house during the early summer of 1890.

Sadly, William Baker Knight died suddenly in December 1890. His wife, Mary,¹³ was listed as living in the house in the 1891 City Directory, but is not listed at all in the 1892 directory. It is likely that Mrs. Knight moved away.

It is unknown who purchased the house from Mrs. Knight, but the house did sit empty for a period of time. A 1914 building permit documents the addition of the house's rear sleeping porch, but the owner listed, A.A. Chamberlain, did not live in the house.¹⁴ The frame addition measured 16 by 20 feet, had a tin roof and was expected to cost \$500 for construction. Marshall and Mary Watson purchased the house circa 1920. Watson was an insurance salesman and his wife continued living there after his death. Mrs. Mildred Morrison purchased the house in the early 1940s and owned it until 1984.¹⁵ Mrs. Morrison is credited with preserving the interior of the house. She was blind and took in boarders to support herself. Her sightlessness made redecorating or modernizing the house unnecessary, keeping the house intact for nearly 50 years.

The front porch of the house was damaged when a tree fell on it in the 1950s, but all visible portions are original to the house. Sections of the original balustrade are stored on-site and will be replicated for installation. The house suffered minimal fire damage in 1965, which was repaired. The house was sold to Elaine Lynne in 1984, to Mark Kersting in 1986 and then to Jim Fitzgerald. Dan Magrone and William Ray, the current owners, purchased the house in May 1999.

¹¹ Advertisement in *The Kansas City Times*, 26 May 1889.

¹² Advertisement in *The Kansas City Times*, 6 June 1889. The park mentioned is Hyde Park, located at 36th Street and Gillham Road, designed in by George Kessler in the late 1880s.

¹³ Mrs. Knight is usually referred to as Molly or Mollie, but her legal name was Mary.

¹⁴ Azra A. Chamberlain was a real estate developer at this time. He may have briefly owned the house and oversaw improvements before reselling it.

¹⁵ Mrs. Morrison was apparently married for a time, using the name Mildred Green, and then reverting back to Morrison. Mrs. Morrison purchased the house with her father.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

**Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri**

The current owners have stabilized the house. Improvements have included a new roof that resembles the original slate, repairs to the wood and stucco, repairs to the porches, upgrades in plumbing, electricity and heating systems and the repair of chimneys. The Kansas City Landmarks Commission has approved all code-related work.

The William Baker Knight home is noteworthy for its association with the prominent Mr. Knight and as a very good example of the Queen Anne style. It retains its integrity in design, materials, workmanship and in its location. It is therefore eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 13

Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 14

**Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri**

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on Lots 12 and 13 of Block 18 in the Hyde Park subdivision of Kansas City, Missouri. The property is bounded on the east by Walnut Street, on the south by 36th Street and on the north and west by adjacent property lines.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the house built in 1890 for William Baker Knight.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photos Page 15

**Knight, William Baker and Mary, House
Jackson County, Missouri**

Photographic Information

The following information is consistent for all photographs:

1. William Baker Knight House
2. Jackson County, Missouri
3. Photographer—William Ray
4. June 8, 2003
5. Negatives retained by the owners of the property.

The following information is applicable to specific photographs:

Photo 1. Southeast corner of the house, camera facing northwest.

Photo 2. Southeast corner of the house, camera facing northwest.

Photo 3. Southwest corner of the house, camera facing northeast

Photo 4. Southwest corner of the house, camera facing northeast

Photo 5. Northwest corner of the house, camera facing southeast

Photo 6. Interior stairwell, camera facing northeast

Photo 7. Interior stairwell, camera facing northeast

Photo 8. Interior stairwell, camera facing northeast

Photo 9. Interior stairwell, camera facing northeast

Photo 10. Front parlor fireplace, camera facing east

Photo 11. Rear parlor fireplace, camera facing west

Photo 12. Upstairs fireplace, camera facing west

Photo 13. Exterior doorbell placement, camera facing west

William Baker Knight
House
UTM Coordinates
15-362900
4324880













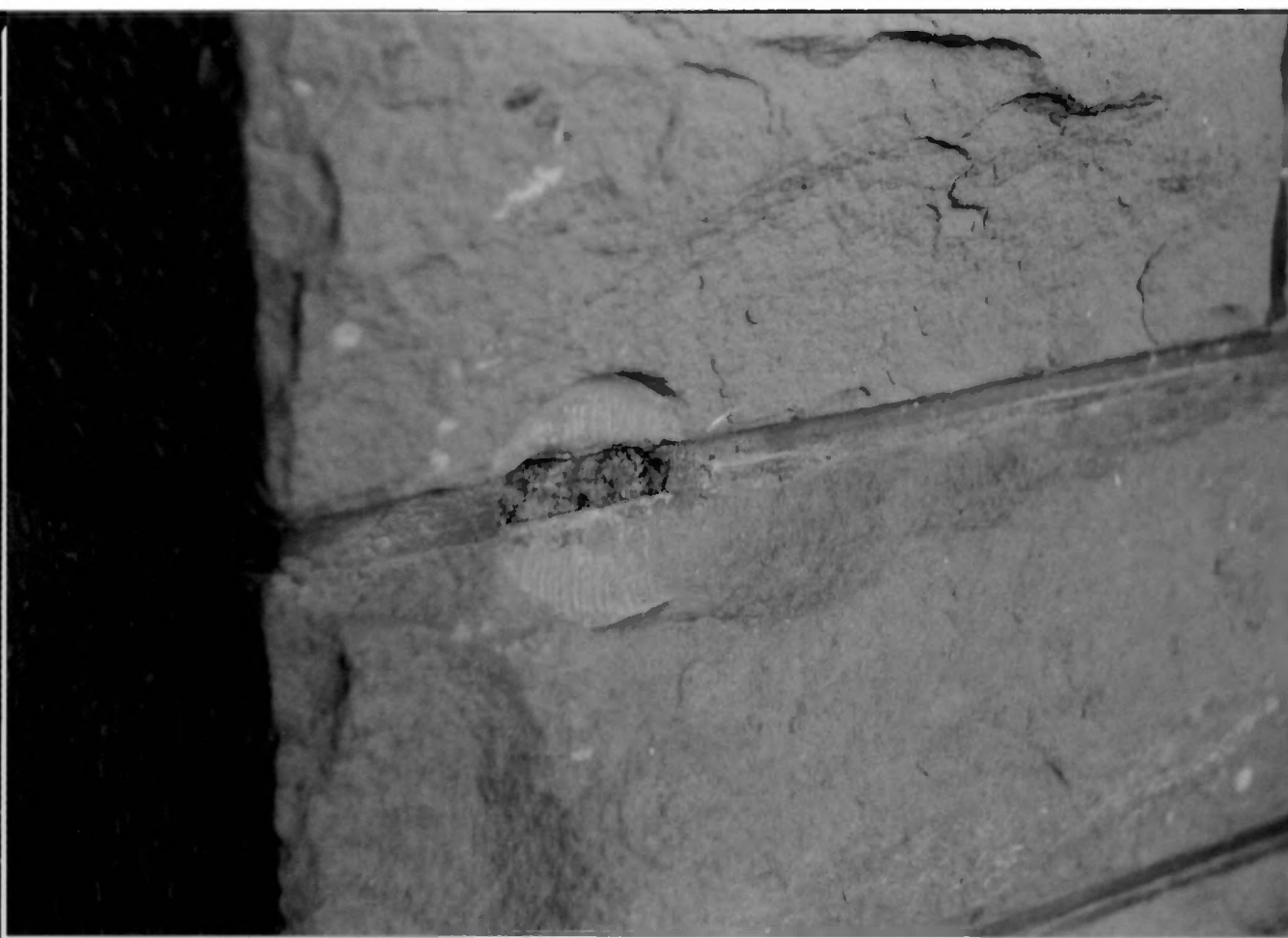












EXTRA
PHOTOS



